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A CHILD'S RECOLLECTIONS OF TENNYSON

EDITH NICHOLL ELLISON

(Tennyson)

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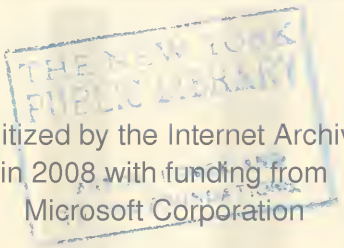
A CHILD'S RECOLLECTIONS OF TENNYSON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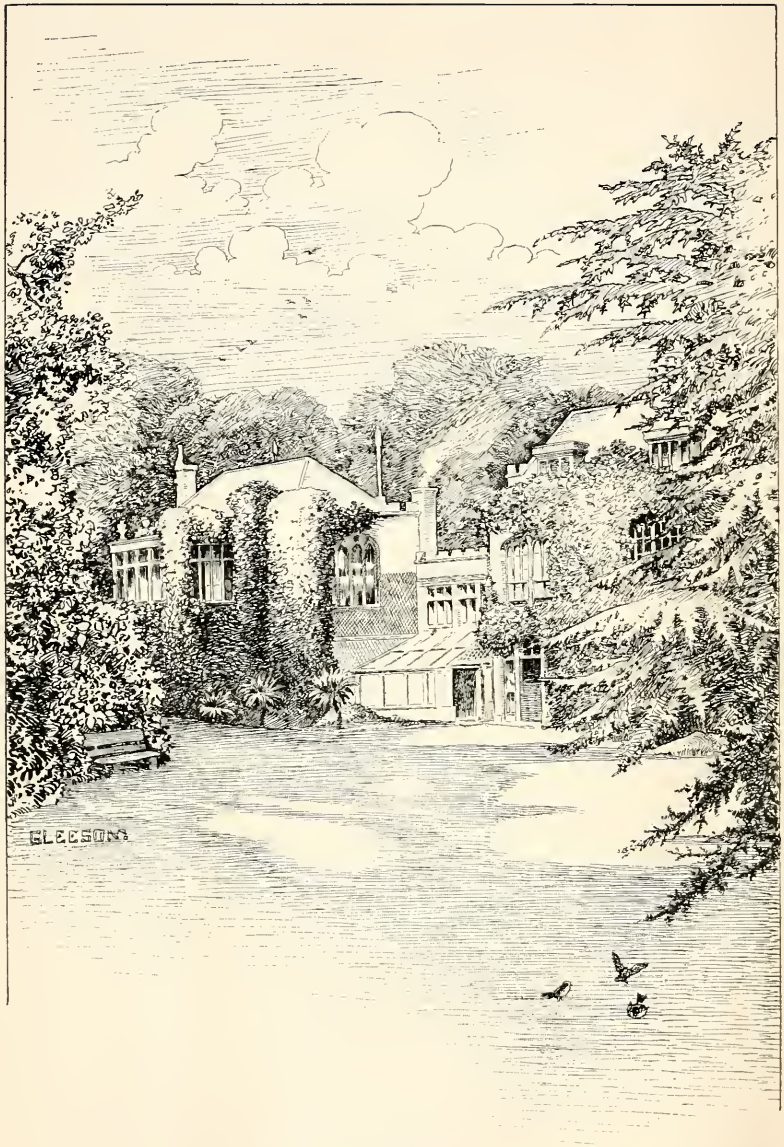

FARRINGFORD

A CHILD'S RECOLLECTIONS OF TENNYSON

BY

EDITH NICHOLL ELLISON

NEW YORK
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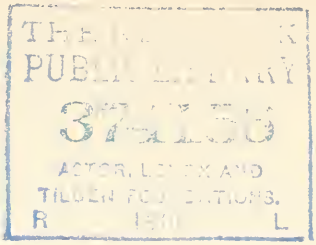

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To My Sister

MARGARET L. WOODS

□

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we 've wandered mony a weary foot
Sin' auld lang syne.

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We 'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidlit i' the burn
Frae mornin' sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roared
Sin' auld lang syne.

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We 'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne!

ILLUSTRATIONS

Farringford	*Frontispiece*	
Mrs. Tennyson	*Facing page*	20
Tennyson at Farringford. About 1866	"	32
Hallam. Aged 12. By Watts	"	42
Lane, Farringford	"	50
Tennyson at Farringford. About 1870	"	100
Lionel. As a Cambridge Undergraduate	"	104
Lionel. Aged 10. By Watts .	"	106
Tennyson and his Nurse . . .	"	110

A CHILD'S RECOLLECTIONS OF TENNYSON

Chapter I

IT all began in the Isle of Wight, far back in the days of the Crimean War; and it is true from beginning to end.

The little girl of the story was only three years old; in fact, she was celebrating her third birthday, so, of course, the first part of the story comes out of her mother's diary.

Her mother was helping her to celebrate, and so was her elder brother — a beautiful five-year-old in a holland blouse. The picture of both children, as they looked then, still hangs in their mother's

room. On that August day in the far past, as in the picture, the little girl's fair curls were snooded with a blue ribbon and crowned with a wreath of blue speedwells and forget-me-nots; for the mother was young, and thought the flowers and ribbon matched the little girl's eyes then. The child also wore a blue frock and a pinafore of fine white lawn. All this is in the mother's diary, of course.

The birthday feast was spread on the top of a low haystack in the barnyard of the farmhouse in which the children and their parents were spending the summer. There was a birthday cake and other good things, — "Isle of Wight doughnuts," and "Isle of Wight junket." No one in the world has tasted junket as

these island people make it ; I mean, no one in the big world outside, across the seas. It is a glorified clabber, covered an inch deep with thick yellow cream and scattered with "Hundreds and Thousands." Those delightful little red and blue pellets, so tiny that you cannot count them, do not grow on this side of the ocean, but on the other side they were one of the sweet enchantments of the children of the Long Ago.

The snowy tablecloth was strewn with wild flowers because the feast took place in the Island of Flowers. A blue awning protected the heads of the revelers from the old-fashioned August sun ; for even the English sun was hot in those blessed days. And beyond the green of the rabbit-warren and the rushgrown common

they could see the rolling downs and the white cliffs and the blue and shining sea.

There was only one drawback to the children's enjoyment, and that was a flock of geese that jabbered and stretched their long necks. The children did not like geese. They had run away from them, hand in hand, too often—running for their lives, as they really believed in those days. However, their mother was with them this time; and after all, though the neck of a goose is terribly long, it cannot quite reach to the top of a stack.

Suddenly there appeared in the barnyard a tall man with flowing black hair. He wore a black Spanish sombrero and a blue cloak

with a velvet collar. His eyes were certainly of the near-sighted kind, but they were dark and bright, and his clean-shaven mouth was curved with a smile.

The mother of the children had never seen the poet before, although their father had met him ; however, she recognized Alfred Tennyson at once.

"Pray, who are you?" asked a gruff but not unattractive voice. "And how did you get up there?"

"I am Granville Bradley's wife, and these are our children. We climbed up here, and we are having a feast because it is our little girl's birthday."

He laughed and cried,

"Hold up the child that I may see her!"

The proud young mother obeyed, and then he stretched out his arms exclaiming,

"Drop her down! Don't be afraid! Mrs. Tennyson and the babies are in the carriage. She can't get out, so come down and see her."

So the little girl was dropped into the poet's arms.

"Little maid, how old are you to-day?" he said.

"Thwee!" quoth she.

"Then you and I have a birthday between us. I am forty-five to-day, and you are three. Perhaps when you are a woman and I am an old man you will remember that we had one birthday once."

Meantime the mother had slipped down the other side of the stack

with Wa-Wa, as the little boy was sometimes called, and walking to the yard gate she found a carriage there, in which was seated a lovely lady. Her large dark eyes beamed a kind welcome, and she was fair-skinned and dressed all in white. With her were two boys, one a baby on his nurse's lap.

After awhile the poet said,

"Now, Emily, you have talked enough! Come, Hallam, take the little girl's hand, and walk together! We will go in the house and see if we cannot find her father."

And just then the father came out to greet the visitors.

Hallam Tennyson was a striking child, with long fair curls and solemn brown eyes; a grave, self-possessed boy, looking like a pic-

ture in his velvet blouse and wide lace collar.

He took the little girl's hand, and said in a low, slow voice,

"How old are you?"

"Thwee. This is my birthday."

"Then we all have birthdays together," replied the little boy. "I'm thwee in four days."

Then the poet went into the small parlor, and seeing the table littered with books, took up a volume of his own poems which was amongst them. It was "Maud," published only a short time before. He talked about the poem, which when it was first published was a good deal disliked; it was not until later that it became so popular. He always begged his friends

"never to hear his pet bantling abused without defending her," and as the father of the children admired "Maud" greatly, he was ever ready to do so. Some time after this when Lear, the artist and musician — known to children as the author of the fascinating "Book of Nonsense" — was at Farringford, he went to the piano and began inventing a musical setting to "Maud," singing the words as he went along. Mr. Tennyson was charmed, and marched up and down the room, occasionally adding his own voice to that of the singer, and exclaiming, "Lear, you have revealed more of my Maud to myself!" But afterward, when a lady tried to improve on Lear's work in setting it down in

black and white, the poet did not like the music any more.

Mr. Tennyson and the children's father talked and talked in the little parlor of the farmhouse that August day, and still could not finish what they had to say; so at last the father walked all the way home with the poet over Beacon Down. And this was the first of many, many such walks to come, and the beginning of a friendship which endured till death.

It was at this time, although the letter is not dated, that the father of the children wrote to his wife's brother[1] as follows:

DEAR WILLIAM: We leave this delightful place to-morrow. We've been here a short fortnight: so glori-

[1] The Rev. William B. Philpot.

ous! Freshwater parish is a triangle at the end of the Island, with its base on a little stream that runs into Yarmouth Estuary, and its apex the Needles. The whole of its south side is a grand chalk down, with cliffs 600 feet high, ending in the Needles, and views that quite craze one. The rest is very broken and interesting ground. We are just at the east end, a short mile from the Needles in Alum Bay, at the foot of the downs just off the chalk on a strip of marine Eocene Tertiary that runs through the Island, with a fine hill opposite us called Headon Hill, overrun by rabbits, and famous geologically. We are, in fact, living at The Warren, in a primitive little farmhouse, three miles from church and seven from the butcher's; a few minutes take us up the down, a few the other way to the sea far below us. I leave it [here come some Greek words which

mean sorrowing at heart]. Moreover, I've seen a great deal of Tennyson. I made bold to call: found him at dinner: so left my card with a line of apology and an appeal to the name of Franklin Lushington. A genial note next day, and an invite to meet Lear, the artist. Two days after another dinner — five o'clock, with long evenings — and since then sundry talks, culminating in a whole day yesterday spent tête-à-tête with him, except just at dinner, etc. We walked early to see the Wealden strata five miles off, and spent all the day walking and sitting. I found I could talk to him as to an old friend on all subjects, high and low, and I believe that even if he had never written a line I should think him one of the finest of the *genus humanum*.

I wish I could see you, my dear fellow, to talk it all over. He

explained to me sundry *cruces* in "Maud," and read or chanted me a good deal of it. Don't you form an opinion about it until you've read it over and over. We talked a great deal on religious questions. A grand fellow, sir! I implored him to come to Rugby,[1] but that is not likely. However, please God, we return here next year, and for a longer time. His house is two miles off, and he walked back with me towards midnight, so I am still under the spell of a great man.

I've read right through the Odyssey here: but not much else, except Jowett's Essays and some geology — you see how it has entered into the Tennysonian brain. . . . The last three nights I've excited myself talking to the poet over much — but I've had little enough of that in this place.

[1] The children's father was then a master at Rugby School.

We get to Rugby early on Friday. We hope to sleep in Oxford to-morrow: it's rather a long journey with wife, brats, and three young Forest ponies.

Best love to you both from both.

Brother,

G. G. Bradley.[1]

And now the story of the little girl's birthday is all told. More birthdays were celebrated in the Isle of Wight, and sisters came into the world to spend it with her; but this third birthday was the most important of all.

[1] The above letter is in the possession of H. S. Philpot, son of the recipient.

Chapter II

NOT so very long after this our father built himself a country home on that green little island in the English Channel. Of course England is an island too, but somehow we never thought of that, as it seemed to us a huge and boundless land; and when we sat upon the deck of the Solent steamer, anxiously watching our favorite ponies trailing behind us in a flat-bottomed boat and rolling about in the foamy waves our steamer churned up, we always felt as if we were making quite an adventurous voyage.

On the English side of the Solent is the famous New Forest, of which everyone had read and

heard so much; but I do not think many persons are acquainted with the New Forest ponies — the prettiest and most spirited breed of ponies in the world, my father thought. He never would own any other breed. They are shaped like small horses, with clean, fine limbs, small, lean heads, which they carry high, and are in every way superior to the rougher, coarser breeds of ponies. The silver-mounted hoof of one particularly wicked little black beauty, who made many a trip back and forth across the Solent, stands on my table now. My father believed that the wickeder the ponies we rode as children, the better horsewomen we should become; and perhaps he was right. Anyhow,

so long as we were children the ponies were never left behind, when, every summer and winter, we went for a few weeks to the Isle of Wight.

Very often, on the pier at Yarmouth, we would see, long before our steamer was made fast to it, certain black specks, which even at a great distance we knew to be the Tennyson family, come down to meet us, Mr. Tennyson always in his Spanish cloak and sombrero. For they were near neighbors of ours at Freshwater, which then was nothing but a straggling village. Beautiful Farringford, the poet's island home, was within easy walking distance, and my sister and I and his two boys were constantly together. The happiest

hours of my childhood were passed in that rambling, romantic, old gray pile, or beneath the spreading cedars and ilexes of its mossy lawns, or playing imaginative games through its woodland mazes or along its broad meadows. We were only children, yet the charm of that big house lay in its mysterious promise of *something* — we knew not what; and now, more than ever, my sister writes me, it resembles the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty in the woods. A house that had a secret passage, too! But we will tell about that later. There were odd, sweet, faint odors in those quaint rooms — odors that appealed to the imagination in some wonderful, quite unexplainable way. We

wondered if the grown-ups felt as we did.

Before me lies a picture of that lovely home. Once more my sister and I are running down the leafy lane, hurrying to Farringford, for a long afternoon and evening play with the boys. There is the low green gate in the wall — the postern gate of old romance — which lets us in to fairyland. Wide it flies, and in a moment we, too, are flying along the pebbly paths that wind through close-growing trees down to the dear old house, nestling, with its mullioned windows and ivy clad gables, like — well, just like a bird in a warm nest. In the picture you can see the side door through which the boys used to come bounding to

meet us — not noisily, though. Noise reigned rampant only in the upper story of the rambling house or in the wide grounds, in sunlit nooks of which stray flowers bloomed in the balmy winters of the Isle of Wight. The boys never forgot that their mother was an invalid, and love and consideration for her came always first with them.

If the afternoon chanced to be damp and gloomy, then we would all four slip swiftly in at the side door, through the boys' study — where they studied every morning with a tutor — across the anteroom connected with the big drawing-room, from this to the hall beyond, and then with a concerted noiseless rush up the stairs, to turn loose the

MRS. TENNYSON

spirit of fun in the endless mazes of that upper floor.

Such a house as that was for "I Spy!" and other thrilling games! All nooks and corners and queer little gable rooms and great big ones leading one out of the other — you never could tell when or where you were safe! The enemy came bouncing out just when you least expected him, and then what a breathless chase there was up and down steps and around sharp corners!

These games never disturbed the calm of the elders below — not even the poet in his far-off study. The walls were too heavy, and winding passages, too, did much to shut out the noise. But on one never-to-be-forgotten afternoon, at an hour

chosen by Mr. Tennyson for his walk, I found an ideal hiding-place — under the steps leading down from his bedroom to his dressing-room. Triumphant and secure I crouched, listening to the footsteps and cries of my playfellows, now near, now far, but ever at fault. Suddenly a gruff voice shouted, "I spy!" and the great figure, which had stooped to peer at me, wheeled and started to run — then unexpectedly whirled again, and catching me up in his arms, the poet pretended to smother me in the folds of his huge cloak, roaring like a bear. At that time I was too old to be scared, but I certainly was startled at the results of my own audacity, and he was gone before I had breath to utter a word.

Then there was the warm and pleasant nursery, opening into the large corridor, in both of which we freely played. The boys possessed what seemed to us the most fascinating collection of books and toys; and a specially entrancing box of lead soldiers furnished our varied imaginations with sport for hours. When we finally tired of these, we would go downstairs to the stone-floored hall, near whose massive front door stood the light of our eyes—the Farringford rocking-horse. To swing forever if we so desired with this glorious steed, two on his sorrel back and one in each of the seats at the ends of his rockers, weaving imaginary tales and singing long, low songs, all together, had a peculiar fascination

for our youthful minds. Years and years later my sister, on a visit to Farringford, wrote me that she had been watching the poet's grandsons rocking on the same beloved horse, and she wondered whether those small boys loved him just in the same way we did.

As we four grew older our games became more and more games without toys. They were endless story-plays, filled with adventure and romance. We played a good deal in pairs, too; for sometimes Lionel, who was very high-spirited, would rebel at the parts given him by his brother in the performance, and he and my sister would run off by themselves. But the quartette was seldom broken for more than a very short time, the rebels soon return-

ing to their allegiance. I never remember a quarrel between the brothers. They were devoted to each other, and to their parents and home; and if Lionel was spirited, Hallam was always patient and tactful. And if, as we grew older, our games became somewhat fanciful and romantic, there was not a trace of silly sentimentality either in ourselves or our play; we were still children, absolutely childlike whether in fun or in earnest.

Perhaps it was the effect of the mysterious old house that kept our imaginations ever on the alert. Certain it was that our rapture knew no bounds when Lionel said one day,

"Did you know that there is a secret passage in one of these walls?

It leads out into the grounds, behind the drawing-room."

We were all in the dim, picture-hung lower hall, and immediately there were low, excited cries of "No — not really?" "How do we get in?" "Let's try now!"

One of the boys ran for a candle, and with much mystery and with very solemn faces we took down the picture behind which the secret passage was said to be. Sure enough, there was a really, truly door!

We opened it, and in we all went, the leader bearing the lighted candle. We might have set the old house on fire, but of course we never thought of anything so commonplace. It was dark in there, and musty and dusty too.

That was a serious little procession stumbling slowly along inside the thick wall. Every step seemed to be leading us further away — back into the dark ages, when England was forever quarrelling with herself and real men fled for their lives along this narrow path to light and liberty — further away from our everyday lives, with its lessons and clean aprons and other tiresome things.

But alas! our trembling joy was shortlived.

"It's no use!" exclaimed our leader in hollow accents. "We can't get any further! The passage is choked with rubbish; yet I *know* it leads into a little room behind the drawing-room fireplace and then out upon the lawn. I

have heard my father tell about it."

In vain we prodded and poked. The dust of ages was too much for us, and sorrowfully we backed out into ordinary life again.

Of the evenings at Farringford very much has been written by grown-ups of and for grown-ups, but no one has told the children's side of these evenings. When Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson were alone, or had only intimate friends — such as our parents — or one or two distinguished guests, to dine with them, the meal was served in the anteroom. Dessert, consisting of fruit, wine, and a particular kind of sweet biscuit which we children believed could not possibly be made anywhere but in the Farringford

kitchen, was served in the drawing-room, on a table drawn close to Mrs. Tennyson's sofa beside the big fireplace. The wide window, looking out on the giant cedar and the lawn, was curtained —well I remember how the boys, who loved pets of all kinds, kept a tame toad in that window!— and the large room was cosy with fire and lamp light. As soon as dessert was ready a summons was sent upstairs to the distant nursery:

"Send the children down!"

And then what a combing of curls (very sadly tangled) and straightening out of frocks and tunics set in! Two girls and two boys, all with long hair and sashes to be tied, and only one nurse to

attend to them all! And one boy full of pranks and mischief!

"It's just his fun!" laughed the long-suffering nurse, whilst she struggled with Lionel's mass of red-gold curls, he, overbrimming with merriment, hindering her patient labors.

At last we were ready, and down we trooped, led by Hallam, whose duty it was to serve the dessert — a loving duty, performed gently, and with that simplicity and absence of affectation, that straightforward courtesy, which characterized both boys. Of this simple frankness a great man once said he did not know whether they had inherited or been taught it.

Even children notice harmonious effects, and to this day I can see

that Farringford drawing-room as it looked then: The soft browns and crimsons touched here and there by the glow of fire and candles — for, if my memory is correct, it was candles that were used; the lady on the sofa, who must never be disturbed by raised voices or noisy steps, robed always in a trailing gown of dove-color, her dark hair crowned with a triangular piece of old lace hanging in lappets on either side of her clear-cut, highbred face, and whose low-toned call of "Allie!" never failed to attract the attention of the bearded poet, sitting smoking in a chair not far removed from her sofa. Then the guests, in those early days more remarkable for quality than quantity, as Mr.

Tennyson in later years, after his sons were grown, became less of a recluse; but quality they certainly possessed, these guests. Scarcely one but had something to say worth hearing or was in some way worthy of notice; yet, as I remember those evenings, it was mostly the poet who talked in a deep, growling voice, his guests occasionally joining in, all very subdued and quiet as they seemed to us, who sat still as mice (though the mice *I* have met never were as still as we were) on our chairs in that great hushed room, eating cakes and fruit. Now and then the poet was what we irreverent little girls called grumpy, and just sat silent, pulling at his beloved pipe. Last, but to us not least,

TENNYSON AT FARRINGFORD

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the two boys. Straight and tall, dressed always in tunics and knee-pants of the same shade of gray as their mother's gown — belted on week-days, crimson sashed and crimson stockinged on Sundays, holidays, and everyday evenings; low, strapped slippers always worn in the house; and on their broad, lace collars their long golden hair falling, Lionel's curls forever in his eyes. They were both fine boys, but the younger's beauty was so great that even we children were conscious of it. He looked like his mother, whereas the elder had his father's deep-set eyes and high forehead. They were attired as the sons of artists or poets, and matched the old house as well as their faces in those days matched their quaint attire.

Before very long we children would slip out and gather around the red coals of the anteroom fire. There we told, in thrilling whispers, hair-raising tales of ghosts and banshees and all kinds of delightful horrors; and this custom we kept up until we were — well, never mind how old!

Occasionally the tall folding doors of the drawing-room opened, and in the entrance stood, solemnly gazing at us — though a twinkle lurked in his deep eyes — a well-known, loosely clad figure, pipe in hand. The boys sprang to meet their father, and lights and music were called for. Then what a banging and beating of the piano, what a shouting there would be! Lionel was really musical, but

there was not much music to be got out of that ancient instrument. In one of the letters published in the life of my uncle-in-law, Sir George Grove, he writes of that piano thus:

"Sullivan went down with me, and pleased both Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson extremely. In the evening we had as much music as we could on a *very tinkling* piano, very much out of tune."[1]

This was the uncle whom Browning, the poet, addressed as "Grove, the Orientalist, the Schubertian, the Literate in ordinary and extraordinary."[1] And besides all these things, and many more, this one of the most delightful of uncles and men was in these later days

[1] Graves' "Life of Sir George Grove."

Director of the Royal College of Music, and his home was the rendezvous for long years of those famous in music principally, but also in literature and art; and it is amusing to think of him subjected to the singular noises given out by that funny old Farringford piano — not to mention Arthur Sullivan, his bosom friend. "What shall I say of Grove?" writes Sullivan. "It would be painting the lily to try and describe his goodness and charm."

Mr. Sullivan, as he was in those early days, was one of the constant guests at the dear old frame house at Lower Sydenham, and it was there that I first saw him — when "Uncle G.," or "G." as he was fondly styled by a large

circle, was editor of Macmillan's Magazine, Secretary to the Crystal Palace, and practically the author of those analytical programmes which rendered the Palace Concerts world renowned. Grove claimed that he was not the "inventor" of the analytical programme; but whether this was so or no, it is certain that for forty Crystal Palace seasons he wrote most of the analyses for the concerts, his great learning and his untiring researches where music was concerned making this work a labor of combined love and art. It was Grove who accompanied Dean Stanley on his trip to this country in 1878. Stanley was my brother's godfather and one of our father's dearest friends, and only our joint representations as to

the roughness of existence in the then wilds of the Blue Ridge prevented the Dean from paying us a visit. As it was, "Uncle G." came on alone to Virginia, and enjoyed himself vastly.

As I remember Sullivan, the published portraits of the celebrated composer are admirable likenesses. But to return to Farringford.

With music in its highest sense such evenings as I am describing had little to do. The hush and quiet which usually prevailed downstairs vanished as if by magic. Scottish songs and old English ballads made the lofty rooms ring again. The poet never failed to call for Auld Lang Syne as a wind-up, he himself standing and crossing hands with the rest,

his deep voice chiming in; for to sing Auld Lang Syne without standing and crossing hands is altogether wrong, and if you had ever sung it as I have many and many a time, with several hundred people, you would hate to sing it or listen to it sung in any other way.

The poet's last call was for good-night kisses. Now this was a part of the performance I did not enjoy, because I so much disliked the odor of tobacco in his raggedy beard. My hair was very long and heavy, and he used to take hold of it by the extreme end, throw that end around his neck, and then turn and turn until he had wound himself close enough to my face for what he called an "osculation."

Then followed the hunt in the boys' study for hats and wraps, many loud good-nights, and away into the darkness we scurried, father and mother close behind, all bound for home and bed.

Chapter III

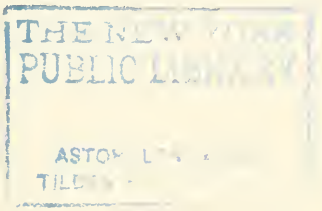
In spite of their quaint costume and their gentle household ways, the boys were no mollycoddles, the younger, as I have said, being particularly high-spirited, and daring also. Yet their chief playmates when we were on the Island were my sister and myself—and after all, we were not such very poor imitations of boys, as we had little to do with girls in those days, and could do everything that boys could, even to playing cricket and football, and taking the kicks and hard knocks without a murmur. It is the fashion now for girls to do as boys do, but then it was not a fashion or a fad, but merely quite a common custom in

England for girls to be athletic, and to ride, or even to run, across country as the boys and men did. No one talked or made a fuss about it, or put their pictures in the newspapers, or blew trumpets, or anything of that kind. If a girl ran several miles across rough country, or stuck to her saddle for a whole day where fences were stiff and water-jumps wide and deep, or leaped higher than the boys in the gymnasium, she just did it — and that was the beginning and end of the whole affair. Therefore it was, I suppose, that the Tennyson boys were able to make good companions of us, although we were girls.

Hallam must have been quite thirteen years old when his father

HALLAM *By Watts*

AGED 12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wrote to the late Duke of Argyle: "I have decided to send my son Hallam to Marlborough. For Bradley is a friend of mine, and Stanley has told me that it is the best school in England." Then, of course, the boy's flowing locks had to be shorn, and I well remember the shocked awe with which we gazed upon our playmate, his yellow mane gone, and attired like an everyday boy.

The games we four loved best, however, were those of the imagination, whether played indoors or out. In the outdoor games a son of Julia Margaret Cameron, the first artist-photographer, often joined us, and also our brother; and when we were in the mood for riotous boy-games the Farringford

meadows were trampled by the feet of many boys — sons of residents for the most part, with occasional visitors; for in those days there was no railroad to Freshwater, and the beauties of that beautiful spot were little known. Neither had Mr. Tennyson — and others beside him — begun to bewail the ruin of their island corner by the intrusions of "bricks and mortar." One of the resident families contained but a single girl in the midst of a small crowd of boys, and this family sometimes came to play in the Farringford grounds, and my brother, my sister, and I often spent part of a day with them at their own home. And a charming home that was. Several acres of

land belonged to it, and when Lady Hammond wanted to call her flock to tea she used to blow a silver whistle which could be heard at a great distance. After tea, before going home, we always spent an hour or so, clustered around her knee, listening breathlessly to awful stories of the Indian Mutiny, through which Lady Hammond and her husband, the Admiral, had safely passed, surviving perils and hardships unspeakable. But though the Hammond boys sometimes came to Farringford, I do not recall the Tennyson boys' presence at any of those gatherings at the Hammonds' home.

But not even a child's picture of Freshwater, which leaves out so

many celebrated grown-ups, would be complete without some mention of the old parish church; and what brings me to this is the fact that the son of its apple-cheeked, kindly rector, Mr. Isaacson, was one of our playmates in our real boy games. I do not know how many years Mr. Isaacson filled this position, but it must have been for a great many, as I cannot imagine Freshwater without him. When I was a small child, I believed him to be a very old man, which shows how absurd children are sometimes. In those days the pews were enormously high and the seats cramped and narrow, and we were shut into these boxes by tall doors. Unless our parents were kind enough to lift us on the seat,

we could see nothing; and Mr. Isaacson's sermons were very, very long. Almost the first thing I can remember is standing on that pew seat beside my father, and suddenly making a remark in a loud voice which caused the congregation to bow their heads in the shelter of their tall pews and my father to catch me up in his arms and hurry down the aisle with me into the open air. I was not taken to church again for some time, he has since informed me. But the remark I made, though out of place, was not unnatural. The pulpit had a canopy top, and was rather like the beds of the period, now coming into fashion again, and the rector wore a shining white surplice; therefore I exclaimed: "Papa,

why has Mr. Isaacson got on his nightgown and is going to bed in church?"

Another curious feature of this old church was its music, which was provided by a barrel or grind organ, whose wheezy sounds came down to us from a bare gallery, in which the singers also were. Everybody who knew Freshwater knew this church, perched high on a hill, and surrounded by a graveyard filled with tombstones, on many of which the quaintest inscriptions were cut deep into the stone and overgrown with mosses. As I said, Freshwater church entered into the life of the children of whom I am writing.

But to go back to our playtimes. Those games of the imagination

played by us in Maiden's Croft were really best beloved of all.

Maiden's Croft, well known to all the poet's friends, was part of the Farringford estate; and though we often played the same games when Hallam and Lionel came to see us at our own home, the magic of the Croft was somehow missing.

Chapter III

MAIDEN'S CROFT, through which runs the path from Farringford to the now famous Beacon Down, is a long, tree-bordered meadow. A lane — a real English lane, shut in by moss-grown, flower-strewn banks, as shown in the picture — divides the Croft from the lawns and groves surrounding the house. A rustic bridge crosses this roadway, and almost underneath the bridge is the little green postern-gate of which I spoke before. The Croft was constantly used by the poet as an outdoor study, and when he was there no one else was permitted to cross the bridge. Usually he paced the length of the meadow, back

LANE, FARRINGFORD

and forth, composing and meditating, but sometimes he wrote in the picturesque summer-house he had had built halfway along the meadow. It was octagonal in shape, and was fitted with benches and a table, and, as his son tells, the poet had himself painted on its windows "marvellous dragons and sea-serpents."

The great man safely out of the way, with some chosen companion, on his daily walk to Beacon Down, stirring times sometimes arrived for that summer-house, and this sacred building was transformed into a castle. Then sprang over the bridge little knights and squires of high degree, bearing lances of reed and shields of closely plaited rushes. Terrific were the

onslaughts upon that castle, gallant its defence, and many a splendid horseman bit the dust. Or the greensward of Maiden's Croft became in imagination lists, whereon were held gorgeous jousts and tournaments, witnessed by high-born ladies, sumptuously arrayed. The sole cause of dispute arose from the vehement opposition of all concerned, the two girls included, to "play lady." The rôle was looked on as insignificant, not to say humiliating, and the matter invariably ended in "making believe." The gallant knights wore the imaginary tokens of imaginary fair ones, and raised reverently admiring eyes to sublime beings, who gazed down upon the lists from imaginary thrones, "Queens

of Beauty" in our dreams alone. Thus all were satisfied. Yet even the degree of squire was viewed askance, particularly as each member of the party was of the opinion that a certain knight belonged to him or her and to no other. For instance, I was Sir Tristram, sleeping or waking, playing or studying my lessons; no one dared to infringe on my rights. The same was true of my sister, who personated another knight of equal renown, whilst Hallam was always Sir Launcelot and Lionel was Sir Galahad. The other players, not being regular in attendance, had to take what they could get. Thus it may be seen that we four, at least, had "The Idylls of the King" at our tongues' ends, and

that, what with these and the immortal legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, we were never at a loss for inspiring games. Neither was it only the Idylls that entered into our young lives. There were few of Tennyson's poems which we could not pour forth in moments of enthusiasm, and besides Tennyson, Shelley, Keats, Swinburne, Wordsworth, and yet others furnished us with an unfailing supply of poetical nourishment. To this day the back of my mind is stored with these old favorites, ready at the slightest encouragement, and often without it, to issue forth. This habit, termed by our mother "spouting," is a trick inherited or caught from our father, from

whose lips, as we galloped together morning after morning over the wide Wiltshire downs, rolled continually the music of England's Immortals. Perhaps it is not such a bad trick, after all; the tongue might be doing worse things. Until I was well in my teens—fully fifteen—I was not allowed to read any novels except certain ones of Walter Scott's, and not even those until the afternoon; and as at that date there were few or no magazines for young people, there was plenty of room for the poetry and history, the love for which our father encouraged in preference to what he called "trash."

I think an incident relating to the poet Dante Rossetti is not out of place here. A scholarly friend

of that great man brought to our house the manuscript of Rossetti's exquisite poem, "The Blessed Damozel." Whether we merely heard our father read it several times, or whether we were permitted to read for ourselves the precious manuscript (although, of course, it may have been but a copy), I cannot say; certain it is that in a very short time the long poem was being reeled off by the yard in those haunts sacred to the young ones of the family. When the poem was published, changes were made of which we stoutly disapproved, and to which to this day I cannot reconcile myself!

We went to the Isle of Wight only for a few weeks twice a year, and it was whilst we were absent that Gari-

baldi paid his memorable visit to the Tennysons. I remember with what delighted amusement we examined the funny caricatures of the family, intended for likenesses, published in the *Illustrated London News*. The picture represented Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson and the two boys receiving the Italian hero under the portico in front of the house, where members of the royal family were always received by them. Every detail of the quaint costumes of the Tennysons was faithfully reproduced, but the faces were, or appeared to us, very comical. Many a laugh we had over them! And the first thing we ran to look at on our return to Freshwater was the tree planted in the Farringford garden by the great patriot.

Chapter IV

MANY of you have perhaps heard of the Tennyson Memorial Cross, set up on Beacon Down, the poet's favorite walk, and dedicated to his memory on August 6, 1897. Also you have no doubt read of that other memorial to the poet, in the far Arctic regions, — a tall pillar of rock discovered by Dr. Kane, the Arctic explorer, on his voyage in search of that other explorer, Sir John Franklin, who was Mrs. Tennyson's uncle. Dr. Kane, therefore, had two reasons for naming that beautiful pillar The Tennyson Monument, — "your memorial of me in the wilderness," as the poet wrote him, — first, as being a warm admirer

of Tennyson's poems; second, because the poet's wife was the lost explorer's niece. A picture of the Arctic Tennyson Memorial hung over the fireplace in the anteroom at Farringford.

But that memorial we have never seen, nor ever shall see. It is the Memorial Cross on Beacon Down in the Isle of Wight which marks a spot both near and dear; for on that spot once stood the old Beacon, full of interest for the children of the long ago, apart from the fact that it was the goal of the poet's everyday walk.

The old beacon was a pole set in a pile of rocks, and in time of "war's alarms" a heap of brush lay always beside it ready for hasty kindling, and the iron basket

upon its top was kept filled with tar for the same purpose; but that, of course, was long before we children were born. Still, we loved to hear our elders tell of the warning fires leaping into the blackness of the night from the white and crimson cliffs of England's furrowed coast, summoning the sturdy yeomen from their beds and the soldiers from their camps to drive away an invader who, after all, never arrived. The Beacon stood where the Cross stands now, at the extreme limit of the Down, overlooking the surge and roar of the sea and the sharp white points of the Needles.

Many happy minutes have I passed lying face downward upon the short grass and wild thyme

and tiny shells of Beacon Down, gazing, fascinated, over the edge of that terrific descent into the boiling caldron below, whilst my patient father held me by the skirts, lest I should fall over and be dashed to pieces on the rocks. Yet the scene had no terrors for me; it was pure, unmixed delight. It was no wonder that the poet loved this scene and view so well that he went there every day. Across the sapphire blue of the Solent stretched the fair Hampshire shore, protected by Hurst Castle on its long spit of sand; and between the Castle and the Needles slipped, hour by hour, ships great and small into the unknown deep or homeward bound from distant lands; bearing with them sometimes the

vague dreams and imaginings of a still untravelled little girl.

Quite as entrancing was it to look down the sheer wall of the cliff into the abyss below. The furious roar of the waves as they dashed the foam high above the Needles and into my own small face peeping over the cliff's brim, the scream of the gray gulls as they wheeled and poised in the heart of the tumult, — all is as vivid as if seen and heard at this moment; and the wail of the ocean birds on the monotonous New Jersey flats speaks to one listener always of enchanted times in the long ago when she lay face downward on a little island's perilous rim, and nothing in the world was real but dreams.

And equally vivid is the picture of the well-known figure pacing the long meadow of Maiden's Croft and climbing the high down,— the picture of a majestic Spanish brigand in flapping sombrero and cloak wrapped in statuesque folds about him. Never did he walk alone, and many great and good Englishmen as well as Americans have paced beside him up on Beacon Down. But to me, as a child, the picture of my own father's small and active form beside that of the more slowly moving poet is the one that left a stronger impression.

Like most persons possessed of what is called the artistic or poetic temperament, Mr. Tennyson was given to fits of gloom. *He* spoke

of these spells as being due to "the black-bloodedness of the Tennysons," but every one knows that other families beside that of the Tennysons are afflicted with such an inheritance. My father used to tell a story about these gloomy spells, which, like others of their kind, seldom had any cause. One summer day he arrived at his Freshwater home in high spirits, and almost immediately rushed off to Farringford to see his poet friend. Not finding him in or around the house, he hurried to Maiden's Croft, where he found Mr. Tennyson sitting alone on a bench. My father smote him impetuously on the shoulder, calling out, "Hullo! how are you?" The poet answered

in a deep voice, and without even turning his head, "Tired of life!" At this time, as it happened, Mr. Tennyson was particularly prosperous and fortunate in every way.

While the boys were still young Mrs. Tennyson's airings were taken in a wheeled chair, drawn by one of the fattest of white ponies, who bore the distinguished name of "Fanny." This otherwise innocent beast was the cause—just once, never again—of bitter mortification to me. For some reason that I do not recall she was sent over for me to ride one day, and I had hardly proceeded a quarter of a mile before the saddle quietly described a half-circle and I was deposited in one of the ditches that always ran on either side of a

Freshwater lane. I was furious. Never had such a thing happened to me before. To think that I should be thrown — and by fat Fanny, too! That this humiliating accident took place just because Fanny *was* so fat was my sole consolation.

When Fanny drew the chair, Mr. Tennyson or the boys usually walked beside it. There was a farm belonging to Farringford, and also a large walled-in garden, — rich in summertime with luscious fruit, — so that Fanny could soberly walk for quite a distance without leaving the estate. In those days Mrs. Tennyson led a life of almost entire seclusion so far as outside visiting went. When Hallam was old enough to drive

a pair of horses, the chair was exchanged for a carriage, and every fine day he drove his father or mother or both. The devotion of the boys to their parents was something for even children to observe and remember. No daughter could have done more for a mother than Hallam did; not all daughters would have done as much. Although a housekeeper was employed, this son, at a very early age, oversaw the household arrangements; and the outside world knows how, as he grew to manhood and after he became a man, he was his father's right hand and his mother's loving aide and companion. It was he of whom the poet wrote to Mr. Gladstone:

"I do not think any man ever had a better son than I have in him."

But we are now talking of childhood's days. Of that united family of four, only one now remains. We used, as children, to believe that the younger boy possessed a touch of his father's genius; and children are sometimes pretty good judges. But you have all read of Pegasus, the winged horse, who never bore harness, and perhaps Lionel's genius resembled Pegasus. It is hard to say, for Lionel died long before he reached his prime. He had a slight impediment in his speech, and as a boy he was given to spells of dreaminess alternating with exuberant spirits. But he had a fine sense of humor, and was, as

I said, musically gifted. After his marriage, when he lived in London, he used this gift for the pleasure and benefit of the working people, and did some literary work besides. But his actual work was in the India Office, and it was during his return from a trip to India with Lord Dufferin that he died of jungle fever, and was buried in the Red Sea. He was only thirty-two years old, and, as his father said, "so full of promise."

Both boys were alike in their care and thought for their delicate mother's health. The hasty young feet fell light and slow on the thick carpets before the drawing-room door was reached, the handle was turned ever so softly, and the jubilant voices hushed. Neither did

their unselfishness and consideration make them unhappy. I have never known a happier boyhood than that of those boys. Quarrels and discontent found no place at Farringford; on the contrary, all was "sweetness and light." And this is no late idealization; we children knew it at the time, and have never forgotten it.

Chapter V

AND now I think we have come to a point where we must not go any further before giving a chapter to Mrs. Cameron, without whom no picture of Farringford would be complete. Julia Margaret Cameron was an artist, not a mere "camera fiend." Not only so, but she was the one living photographer at that date who attempted the artistic; therefore she was not appreciated as she deserved to be. She was very intimate with the Tennysons, her picturesque if somewhat untidy home being not very far away, and that home, as she describes it herself, often the scene of "feasts of intellect." Mr. Cameron himself was a learned and interesting

man, but to the children of those days a rather mysterious and awe-inspiring being, with his long white beard and hair and Oriental garb, —for the Camerons had lived many years in India. There were several sons, but only one near our own age. He had a passion for the stage, and would have made a success of his chosen profession, I have been told, had it not been for a defect in his eyes which finally compelled him to abandon an actor's life.

Mrs. Cameron was neither mysterious nor awe-inspiring, but just a kind, exacting, though benevolent, tyrant. Children loved but fled from her. I can see her now, clad in the never-failing wrapper, stained—as were her hands and

eager face — with the chemicals she used in her work, her hair falling any way but the right way, lying in wait some fine morning at her garden-gate for the young ones passing down the road on their way to Farringford or to the sands of Freshwater Bay.

"She's coming! She 'll catch one of us!"

And sure enough an arm would intercept the passage of some luckless wight, and, bribed by jars of preserve or other toothsome dainty, the victim was led away to spend the sunny hours posing in the studio. Photography was then, at the best, a slow and tiresome process, and Mrs. Cameron never hurried in her work. Endless were the poses, especially if, as was often

the case, the chosen victim was to represent some character in poem or story. Mrs. Cameron did not, as a rule, care for mere beauty—she wanted an artistic subject; nevertheless, two pretty cousins of ours visiting us at Freshwater were favorite victims. Lionel Tennyson was, perhaps, her star performer, however, among the children; and indeed he was artistic enough to satisfy anyone. But none escaped his or her turn. At that time she was specially fond of illustrating Mr. Tennyson's poems by means of captured children, and "Enoch Arden" had its full share of attention —and of victims! She tried two or three assortments before she was satisfied, and if my memory serves me right, her final choice fell on

my two cousins and Hallam Tennyson.

Her particular favorite for a long time was a servant girl, who to the ordinary eye was no beauty, but who became the artist's idol. She certainly posed beautifully, and when Mrs. Cameron began to exhibit her pictures in London, as she did later on, some of her finest photographs were pictures of this girl, of whom she made a pet.

Of course Mr. Tennyson had to pose constantly for her, but he never yielded without a struggle. He used to meet her prayers and coaxings with jeers and fun, and laugh at her enthusiasm, but she usually won the victory, as many a splendid portrait of him proves. The picture she took of the poet in

1867 is more lifelike to me than any other. Undoubtedly Mrs. Cameron was a genius in her own way. But she certainly was a strange looking figure, and it was no wonder that, as Mrs. Tennyson tells in her diary, Garibaldi thought she was a beggar when she kneeled before him, her stained hands upraised, begging to be allowed to take his picture.

She had another passion also, though probably she indulged this passion for the stage as much to please her youngest son — her Benjamin — as herself. She built a small theatre adjoining the house, and there for a good many years she was in the habit of staging well-known plays, the performers being her amateur young friends.

The last year before my part of the story was ended by my coming out to this country to join my brother, we spent a few of the winter weeks at Freshwater in a house belonging to Mr. Tennyson — we having long outgrown our own home on the island — and were at once pressed into service by Mrs. Cameron, who wanted to present a play in the interests of charity. I do not feel sure of the play itself, but think it was one popular at that date, "Our Wife," the heroine being represented by my luckless self. I say luckless, because Mrs. Cameron was as severely exacting in this direction as she was in her photography. Her troupe consisted of my sister and myself, Hallam and Lionel, and her own son Henry. Her

excitement and enthusiasm were greater than can be described, the audience was expected to be large, and the tickets were sold rapidly. Her studio was deserted for her parlor, in which daily rehearsals took place. Now the play was a sentimental one, chosen by herself, and there was consequently some rebellion on the part of the performers during these rehearsals. Girls and boys who had been playmates from childhood objected to standing up in the light of day in a commonplace parlor, in their everyday clothes, and making violent love to order—in cold blood too, without paint and powder, or footlights or applause. However, our kind tyrant would have it so, though the mischievous Lionel

"took it out" not only at the rehearsals, but, sad to say, during the public performance of the play by turning his back now and again on the audience and twisting his face into horrible grimaces for the encouragement of the fellow-sufferer who chanced at the moment to be "speaking" his or her "piece."

During some of the rehearsals Mrs. Cameron became very much displeased with the backwardness of her troupe in the love-scenes. One day in particular she leaped to her feet and almost knocked our heads together.

"Oh, heavens, Henry!" she cried. "Do you call *that* making love? Here — let *me* show you how to do it!"

Then seizing the reluctant hand of the unfortunate heroine of the romance, she flung herself upon her knees and poured forth a flood of impassioned words, winding up with an embrace which certainly was not at all like those we see on the stage, because it was the real thing.

"There!" she exclaimed, rising out of breath and triumphant. "*That's* the way to do it!"

"All right, mother!" replied her son, a comical gleam in his eye. "All in good time!"

She scolded and wrangled in her own good-natured way to the very last, and it was not until the falling of the curtain on the eventful night that her beaming face and her rapturous embraces of each member of

her troupe bore eloquent witness to her final satisfaction.

And now we will go back to the children.

Chapter VI

AFTER Hallam was sent to Marlborough College, of which our father was head master, the Tennysons visited us more than once. The climate was rather severe, and was considered too much so for Lionel, particularly as the boys—all boarders, and between four and five hundred in number—made it a point of honor to harden themselves; that is to say, go without overcoats in the bitterest winter weather. But it was a great school—considered then the best in England; according to Matthew Arnold considered so "by universal consent." Lionel went later to Eton.

The principal building of Marlborough College was, and is, a

beautiful old red brick Elizabethan mansion, which after it passed out of its noble owner's possession was used as an inn in the days of stage coaches. When we first went to Marlborough one coach still passed through the broad street of the town, though the old inn had long been turned into a school. The town itself is to this day one of the most picturesque in England, with its ancient houses, — pent-houses, as they are called, — whose upper stories project so far over the lower ones that persons can walk half the length of the street on a rainy day without getting wet. The street is not only long, but immensely wide — in fact, one great market-place. There is nothing like it anywhere that I have seen. Mr. Tennyson

is reported as quoting the saying that "If God made the country and man the town, the devil made the country town!" Nevertheless, he admired the town of Marlborough very much.

The tall tower of one of the parish churches divides the street at its end, and in the bend of the road —the great coach road to Bath— stands the college, with its different buildings, and the master's house— *our* house, as it once was. Splendid lime trees rear their tall heads about the older buildings, and in front of the Elizabethan mansion spreads the old garden, just as it used to be in ancient days, with its velvet bowling-green and wide terrace and fantastically cut yews, and tall limes whispering in a circle as

the breeze from the Wiltshire downs tosses their leaves. Could a better place be found for the romantic games in which we delighted? A venerable wall separated the college garden from that of the master, but all alike were beautiful. On one of his visits the poet was inspired by the enchantments of these gardens to write a poem there; at which we did not wonder in the least.

A visit from the poet laureate was, of course, a great event at Marlborough. Everyone desired to meet him, but only a few could be chosen. His visits were never long, and nobody must be invited to the house who could by any possibility bore him. My parents had to set their wits to work for some time before his arrival. The schoolboys

were never overlooked, and the sixth form — the highest class in the college — were invited as a whole to hear him read his own poems. A great deal of praise has been bestowed upon these readings, but I have to speak of them as we young ones found them, and I am sorry to say they seemed to us rather uncomfortable performances. We were accustomed to the musical cadences of our father's voice, whose reading not only of poetry, but of the Bible's grand prose was unique, and when the poet read I really must confess that we thought he was shy, as we heard little but mutterings and grumblings into his straggly beard. While we are quite young, you know, we do not think just like everyone else, but we have

"long, long thoughts" of our own. And we were young. "We" meant at that time my sister, myself, and a girl cousin who lived with us. Of this cousin I must tell a funny little tale, which she has since often laughed at herself. After the carriage had rolled from the door one morning, bearing the departing poet, our cousin ran to us in the schoolroom in great glee, carrying something carefully in her hand. For some time she would not let us look at her treasure, or tell us what it was. Finally she opened her closed fist very cautiously, and we peeped in. What do you think she had? A bunch of hair combings! "What are those?" we exclaimed with fine scorn. "They are Mr. Tennyson's hairs!" she

cried with a mixture of defiance and triumph. "I combed them out of his brush!" But I am ashamed to say that we continued to poke fun at her.

There were certain rooms at Marlborough dedicated to the poet's use, and my mother kept his special coffee cup and saucer under a glass case, so that no one else should drink out of them.

We were excessively proud and fond of Marlborough and everything connected with it, and that the poet was also quite enthusiastic pleased us very much. Besides the wide chalk downs, there was a most beautiful forest—Savernake Forest—belonging to the Marquis of Ailesbury, but open to all. In it were broad, grassy glades and magnificent

timber, and one specially fine avenue shadowed for two or three miles and more by high, over-arching trees. There were troops of fallow deer in the forest, and altogether it is one of the loveliest and most attractive estates in England, and to us, in our youth, quite perfect.

Neither were the forest and the downs all there was to show the visiting poet. The druidical remains of Stonehenge were within a long drive, but much nearer — indeed all around — were monuments of rock raised by unknown hands, sometimes valleys full of such, relics of ancient British villages, huge mounds which were the last resting-places of long-forgotten warriors, and many, many things of interest to the historian and antiquarian.

They were interesting to us too, so we found it not at all surprising that Mr. Tennyson enjoyed his Marlborough drives. Dearly did we love that home, and it was a sad day for us when our father became master of University College, and we had to move to Oxford, Archdeacon Farrar taking his place. I was at school in Germany at the time, and I well remember how grieved I was to hear that Marlborough was to be our home no more.

Our respective fathers were very much interested in language, the study of words, their derivation, and so forth. Amongst my father's many scholarly friends were men of note in this particular line. I remember well an argument which

took place on the lawn at Marlborough between Hallam on one side and my sister and myself on the other, Hallam and I being perhaps thirteen years old at the time. We contended for the broad A, because our father rightly insisted that the narrow A was a Cockneyism, pure and simple, and did not belong to the language. Our mother used the narrow A, and Hallam vainly endeavored to twist our mouths to something betwixt and between, which he claimed on his father's behalf. We laughingly refused, however, to accept the compromise, which probably was a satisfactory one, nevertheless.

In Tennyson's Life by his son is mentioned the incident of our Belgian governess placidly replying,

when the poet asked her how much of his reading of "The Northern Farmer" she had understood, "Pas un mot, Monsieur." "Not one word." We were fond of our governess, who still remains a friend of the family; but I remember that we were very much amused by her calm, undisturbed reply, and also wondered how much of his careful explanations she understood. Probably "pas un mot" either!

The organist of the college chapel, who also trained and managed the large, fine choir of schoolboys, was a more than ordinarily good musician. We three girls received lessons from him, and were the most loyal admirers of his playing on both organ and piano, not to mention his compositions. To this

day Mr. Bambridge's rendering of The Dead March in "Saul" on the chapel organ, on one of those sad occasions of the deaths of boys, is an impressive memory with me. Such occasions fortunately did not occur often, but when they did, it is difficult to imagine anything more solemn and pathetic than this assembling of the whole great school, masters included, to mourn the going out of some young life. And when the music chanced to be a favorite, the entire congregation would throw themselves into it, heart and soul, the volume of harmony, whether sad or triumphant, rising high over the strains of the powerful organ. No one who has ever formed part of such scenes can ever forget them. Heart and soul

were indeed stirred to their depths. When the whole school rose to sing, to Mr. Bambridge's beautiful and unforgetable music, the hymn,

"Thou art gone to the grave, but we will not deplore thee,
Though sorrows and darkness encompass the tomb,
Thy Saviour hath passed through its portals before thee,
And the lamp of His love is thy guide through the gloom,"

it was not singular that many young voices were choked and many young eyes dim. It was this exquisite composition that moved Mr. Tennyson to admiration, although he never heard it sung, as we did, by hundreds of voices at the death of a schoolmate. Marlburians are scattered all over the face of the earth,

a goodly proportion of them have mounted to "the seats of the mighty," many have passed in their turn through the grave's portals, but I doubt if any living son of their beloved Alma Mater could listen unmoved to these familiar strains.

Chapter VII

BUT children grow up in spite of everybody and everything, and we did as the others do. I was almost ready for long dresses and tucked-up hair when my father sadly tore himself away from beloved Marlborough to go to Oxford. I do not believe anything but the knowledge that his delicate health was unequal longer to the strain of that big and important school would have induced him to leave Marlborough, for he had already in the past declined other and greater honors. But the Wiltshire climate was harsh and the responsibility tremendous; so, even as he himself had taken the place of one friend—my godfather, Bishop Cotton, of Calcutta

—so he made way for another friend, Dr. Farrar.

Our last visit to Freshwater paid as a family was, as I have told, spent in a house belonging to Mr. Tennyson close to Freshwater Bay. Our home was then at Oxford. The happy days of bringing ponies were over, but the boys contrived to find us something to ride occasionally, and on one of these occasions a rather curious incident occurred. Whilst we four were galloping over the downs and through the lanes, my mother had been spending the afternoon with Mrs. Tennyson, and suddenly springing from her chair she ran out bareheaded, exclaiming that she had just seen Hallam and myself racing our horses across the lawn past the drawing-room

windows. We were miles away at the time, and in any case should not have used the beautiful mossy lawn for a race-course, so the matter was left unexplained; its rather disagreeable though only result being that our mother, who had never been nervous about us before, was for some time afterward uneasy when we were out riding with the boys, as she could not help fearing that what she had seen, or believed she had seen, meant that some accident was going to happen to either Hallam or myself. But her fears were unfounded.

Both Mr. Tennyson and Hallam were fond of making personal remarks, to which both my sister and myself strongly objected. When Hallam thus sinned, we had no

hesitation in voicing our objections as loudly as we so desired; but with his father it was otherwise. One day at this time we were driving with the two in an open carriage, my sister and I facing them. Hallam started the trouble by fixing his eyes calmly and coolly on our faces, first one and then the other, for several minutes. We silently remonstrated, but in vain. We knew his ways too well. Losing patience, one of us ejaculated,

"What *are* you staring at, Hallam?"

With the same coolness as before, he turned away, and addressing his father, as if we were wax figures at Madame Tussaud's, said,

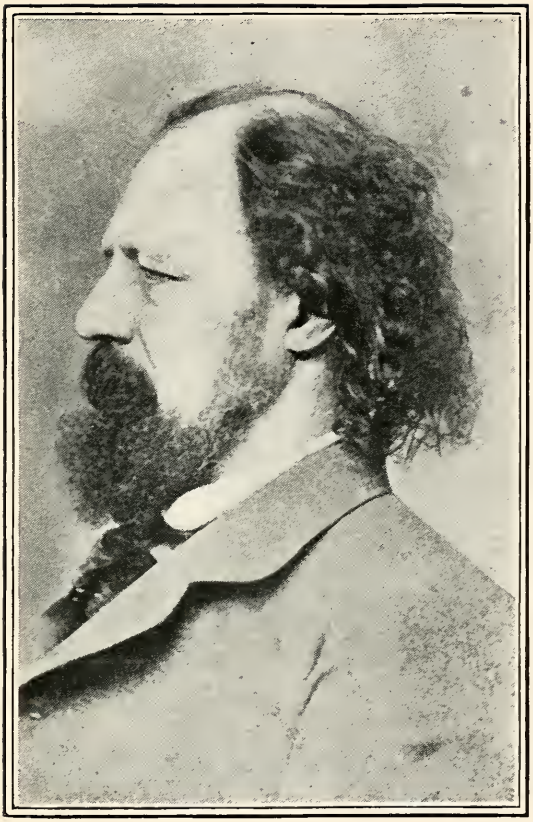
"Father, would you call Edith and Daisy fair or dark?"

A long and awful pause. Mr. Tennyson drew forth his glasses, carefully wiped them and placed them on his nose, with as much deliberation as though he were going to inspect a picture he had never seen before, although the one before him had been familiar for a great many years. His extraordinarily piercing, deep-set eyes transfixed us in turn. Finally he thrust out his lips and pronounced judgment in the profoundest tones of his bass-drum voice:

"*I* should call them half-way houses!"

Then those eyes twinkled, and half-way houses we were for a long time to come.

Another incident which at the time did not seem amusing to us,



TENNYSON AT FARRINGFORD

About 1870

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but which later we understood better, belongs to that year.

When I was about thirteen or fourteen, my sister and I were fired with the desire to edit a magazine. Very early in our editorial career we received the support and encouragement of our father's brilliant young step-brothers, the younger of whom was not only near my own age, but a warm and close friend. In its early days this magazine was brought out quarterly, and every word of it was copied by my own hand. Our list of contributors as well as subscribers was even then quite large, and after we moved to Oxford we found ourselves able to have the magazine printed. Oh, the pride and joy with which we gloated over those first printed pages! At the

time of which I am writing, "The Miscellany" had several noted names on its list—noted then or since. Unfortunately the magazine died a natural death after I came to this country, and but few copies remain of the long-lived "Miscellany"; but we had one hundred and twenty subscribers in the Oxford days, and such men wrote for us as Andrew Lang, William Hurrell Mallock, A. T. Myers, Hallam and Lionel Tennyson, and others since known to fame. Needless to say, all these wrote "for glory!" Perhaps I should also mention among the authors my two uncles, whom the scholarly element in England recognizes amongst its honored sons, and my own sister.

In that last Isle of Wight sojourn we were at the height of our ambitions, and one of these was to persuade Mr. Tennyson to give us four lines for the title-page of our coming January number. But neither my sister nor myself could screw up our courage to the sticking-point. At last, repeatedly urged by Hallam, I found courage and opportunity on one of the Auld Lang Syne evenings I have already described. Probably something had occurred to annoy the poet, or his reasons were better than they seemed to us at the time, the children of his old friend; but at all events he replied by asking me how much money I supposed every word of his to be worth? Perhaps he was joking, but we were well accus-

tomed, in our own family circle, to jests. However, we and our ambitions were successfully quenched.

That winter Eleanor Locker, whom Lionel afterward married, was visiting at Farringford. He was married the year after my own marriage took place; then came that of my sister; and, after an interval of a good many years, that of Hallam.

Both the boys went to Cambridge, and more than one plan was formed for us to go and see them there; but their festive times occurred during our Oxford "Commemoration"—or, as we call it here, "Commencement"—and then our duties as daughters of the head of a college prevented us from leaving

LIONEL

AS A CAMBRIDGE UNDERGRADUATE

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home. But they came to see us at Oxford.

My own recollections of Aldworth, the poet's home on far-famed Blackdown in Surrey, take in but one visit, as not very long afterward my brother and his wife carried me off with them to Virginia, where within a year I was settled in my own home in the beautiful Blue Ridge country.

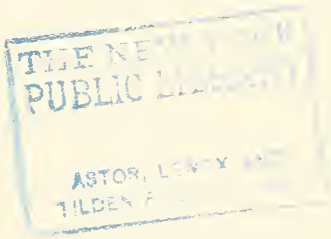
Aldworth, as it then impressed me on my first and last acquaintance with it, belongs to those "stately homes of England," of which, I think, it is Mrs. Hemans who sings. No doubt, however, you have seen pictures of the fine stone house standing high on the ridge of Blackdown. From its balustraded terrace the eye ranges

over hills and woods and rivers until it rests upon the blue ribbon of the English Channel, and around and about the house are the lawns and flowers and woods in which both Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson so much delighted. But somehow the witchery, the vague promise of romance, which enchained our youthful hearts and imaginations at Farringford, are absent. Yet Aldworth is a noble home, worthy of a great poet.

It is at Aldworth that the picture of the boys, painted by Watts, hangs. It represents them in their days of long hair, tunics, and wide collars; and though we young ones never thought the likeness of Hallam good, that of Lionel seemed to us remarkably so, as it brings out not

LIONEL *By Watts*

AGED 10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only the beauty of the child face, but its hidden poetry too.

During those few days at Aldworth we took up again our childhood's ways. There, as at Farringford, was an anteroom, to which, after a reasonable time spent with our elders after dinner, we retired, enticed out by Lionel, who was always primed for fun, and followed later by Hallam. There, as in the old days, we crowded around the dying open fire and told tales of haunted houses and other creepy horrors, in the spinning of which yarns Lionel was especially proficient.

There were certain "sacred" hours during the day in which the poet, as befits a poet, liked to commune with his own soul and that

of no one else. Yet he did not always care to be alone in these hours. As my sister writes:

"Do you remember his morning walks at Aldworth, on which he liked to have company, but liked it to walk behind and not speak to him? So it did. Two or three of us following in single file over the heather. It was quite nice."

Certainly I remember. The figure and the cloak — and the silence, in which alone high thoughts are set to noble words.

At other times we either drove, all of us, in two carriages through that lovely country, or when Hallam, most devoted of sons, felt that he could be spared from attendance on his parents, one or both, we four young ones mounted horses,

and with lunches attached to our saddles, raced away, to be gone for hours. As there chanced to be no other guests but our parents and ourselves, Hallam, who was the mainstay of the household, was more than usually at leisure.

One day in particular I recall. This elder son had made all arrangements for the comfort of the family during the few hours he expected to be absent, and all four of us were in the dining-room, chattering and having a good time, whilst we cut bread and meat for sandwiches. No doubt we were making a noise too, for Lionel was in riotous spirits, and as usual the wit of the company. At all events, although the windows were wide open, we

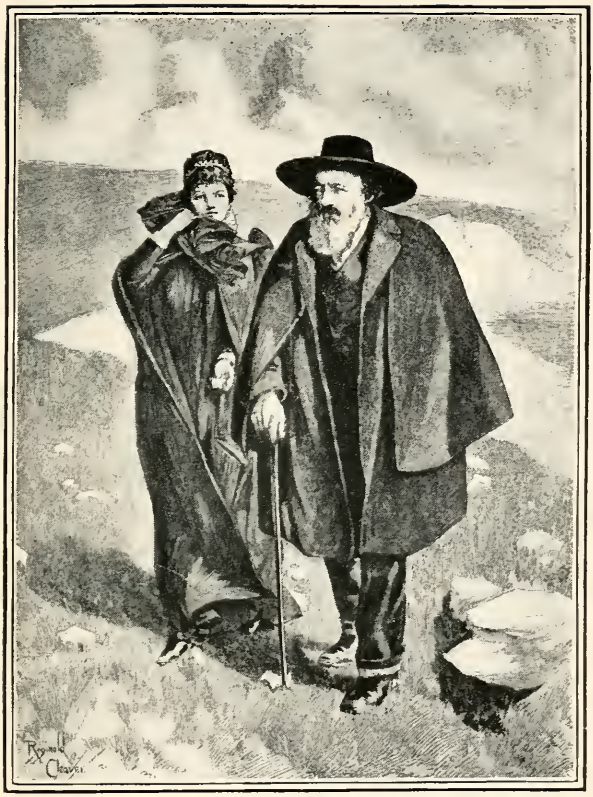
did not hear the well-known massive tread on the gravelled terrace without, or notice the darkening of one of the windows by the large, cloaked form. Then we were startled by that deep-toned voice:

"Hallam, I wish you would stay at home to-day. I need you."

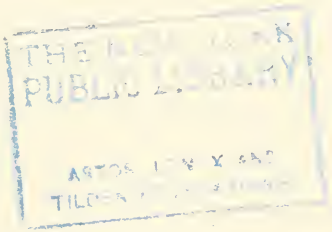
There was an instant's pause — scarcely more — on the part of one of the best sons in the world, and then came the cheerful, unhesitating reply.

"Very well, father. I will be with you directly."

And we three rode away without Hallam. Thus it was always. And it is no exaggeration to say that in this absolute devotion he found great happiness; also, no doubt, his reward, if one were needed.



TENNYSON AND HIS NURSE



After I came to this country our father was appointed Dean of Westminster, to succeed his almost lifelong friend, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley. Mr. Tennyson paid more than one visit to the deanery—how many I do not know, as I never was in England but once when he was at our house. It was on this occasion that he took his seat in the House of Lords for the first time. He enjoyed wandering around the abbey and cloisters, and took much interest in the theatre, especially after his own plays had been put upon the stage.

To the deanery many persons of note were invited to meet him, some of these as great, each in his own way, as the poet laureate himself, and it was at a luncheon party

given in his honor on the day he received his peerage that a rather amusing incident took place. The deanery servants were apparently greatly impressed with the fact that Mr. Tennyson was now a peer, and the butler in particular so far parted with his customary composure as to address Browning as "my lord." The genial gentleman threw up his hands in disgust. "Don't 'my lord' *me,* my good man, I pray!" he cried, considerably to the amusement of one of my sisters who sat next him at table, and who, like all who knew him, admired Mr. Browning extremely.

And this was the last time I saw England's poet laureate.

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